

Social Security

- [Overview](#)
- [Cost of Living Adjustment \(COLA\)](#)
- [Deficit Contribution](#)
- [Sponsored Legislation](#)
- [Cosponsored Legislation](#)

Social Security is a contributory social insurance system that covers 164 million workers (94 percent of workers in paid employment or self employment) and provides monthly cash benefits to 51 million beneficiaries, including retired and disabled workers and their dependents, as well as the dependents of deceased workers.

Social Security was enacted in 1935 and was intended to improve the economic circumstances of older adults during the Depression. As more and more people were covered and living longer, Social Security has been modified to address these changes over the years.

Social Security has been, for 75 years, a bedrock promise. You have earned it with a lifetime of hard work, and it should be there for you and future generations.

In 2008, the Social Security trust fund assets were at \$2.4 trillion. Although the trust fund is projected to have a positive balance until 2037, costs are projected to exceed income by an average of 14 percent over the 75-year projection period as our population ages.

Considering the large and important role that Social Security has in America's safety net for older and disabled, widowed and orphaned citizens, comprehensive Social Security reform has been a perennial and contentious item on the Congressional agenda.

I fully support maintaining traditional Social Security and finding ways to effectively extend it

without cutting benefits to our nation's seniors.

According to the Congressional Research Service: "In 2008, 69% of aged Social Security beneficiaries received more than half of their income from Social Security, and 41% received more than 90% of their income from Social Security. Moreover, Social Security is credited with keeping many of the nation's elderly out of poverty. An estimated 8% of aged Social Security beneficiaries fall below the poverty line, compared with an estimated 22% of aged non-beneficiaries."

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

To compensate for the effects of inflation, Social Security recipients have been eligible to receive a cost of living adjustment (COLA) each year since 1975. The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) is the measure used to compute the cost of living adjustment. If there is no percentage increase in the CPI-W between measuring periods, as was the case last year, no COLA is payable.

Several policies have been suggested to offer a more accurate measurement of change in the cost of living. One example, especially considering how much more older adults and people with disabilities tend to spend on health care, is the bill that Rep. DeFazio (D-OR) introduced, H.R. 2365, the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act, of which I am a cosponsor.

In addition, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 5987, the Seniors Protection Act, which will ensure that seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities who receive Social Security and certain other federal benefits receive a one-time \$250 payment in the event that no cost-of-living adjustment is payable in 2011. This bill was introduced on July 30, 2010 by Rep. Pomeroy (D-ND).

Deficit Contribution

Social Security is not adding to the deficit – it pays its own way through worker contributions. In addition, Social Security is not running out of money. The Social Security Trust Fund has significant reserves and can pay full benefits until 2017.

Resolutions I Have Sponsored

H.RES.1077 Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives against severe changes to Social Security. Sponsor: Rep Larson, John B. [D-CT-1] (introduced 2/5/2010)

Legislation I Have Cosponsored

H.R.235 Social Security Fairness Act of 2009 Sponsor: Rep Berman, Howard L. [D-CA-28] (introduced 1/7/2009)

H.R.1067 Notch Fairness Act of 2009 Sponsor: Rep Hall, Ralph M. [R-TX-4] (introduced 2/13/2009)

H.R. 2006 Elder Justice Act Sponsor: Rep King, Peter T. [R-NY-3] (introduced 4/21/2009)

H.R.2365 Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act of 2009 Sponsor: Rep DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4] (introduced 5/12/2009)

H.R. 3672 Social Security COLA Fix for 2010 Act Sponsor: Rep McCarthy, Carolyn [D-NY-4] (introduced 9/29/2009)

H.R.3810 Emergency Senior Citizens Relief Act of 2009 Sponsor: Rep DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4] (introduced 10/14/2009)